

VZCZCXRO2218  
OO RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #0075/01 0081802  
ZNY SSSSS ZZH  
O 081802Z JAN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC IMMEDIATE  
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8978  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 04 BAGHDAD 000075

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2017

TAGS: [IZ](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#)

SUBJECT: JANUARY 7 MCNS: IRANIAN DIPLOMATS, BSP, AND PIC  
AMONG TOPICS DISCUSSED

REF: 2006 BAGHDAD 4718

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (S) SUMMARY: On January 7, the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS) discussed the recent detention and subsequent release of Iranian "diplomats" involved in anti-Coalition and anti-GOI activity, agreeing that steps needed to be taken to discourage Tehran from engaging in further activities that undermine Iraqi sovereignty. The MCNS was updated on revisions to the Baghdad Security Plan, with Minister of Defense Abdul Qadir Jasim and MNF-I Commanding General Casey stressing the need to appoint a commander for Baghdad. PM Maliki and FM Zebari expressed frustration with the public discussion of the "secret" plan, resulting in an order from Maliki that the MoD spokesman be kept off of TV. On the subject of Provincial Iraqi Control (PIC), PM Maliki was willing to end the Emergency Security Committee in Al Amarah so that security responsibility for Maysan could be transferred. Casey, however, said he was not yet ready to approve the transfer because he believed that the militias in the province were stronger than the police. Transfer of the three Kurdish provinces remains on hold until the Kurdish authorities agree to "decouple" PIC from Peshmerga transformation; Maliki said he would talk to Kurdish President Barzani about this issue. Maliki noted the creation of a committee to examine disbanding the militias, resulting in a discussion of how thoroughly disarmament can/should be carried out. Interior Minister Bolani updated participants on several issues in the MOI, including Facility Protection Service (FPS) integration. He said he had found 40,000 non-existent workers on the FPS rolls. Bolani also argued for merger of the Ports of Entry authority with his Border Security unit and discussed progress in MOI Training and Equipping issues. Maliki revived his concerns that both the MOI and MOD are ill-equipped. When Finance Minister Jabr complained that he had been forced to rush through funds to the MOD that he did not think the MOD needed or was prepared to spend, Abdul Qadir pushed back, arguing that he was working to conclude contracts as quickly as possible. At the same time, he made clear that he was going to take the time to properly evaluate the quality and costs of equipment before agreeing to buy it. END SUMMARY.

Discussion of Iranian "Diplomats"

12. (S) At the January 7 meeting of the Ministerial Committee on National Security (MCNS), Foreign Minister Zebari thanked the Ambassador and MNF-I Commanding General Casey for working with him in a collegial and professional manner in order to resolve the situation of the detained Iranian "diplomats." He said that there had never been any doubt in his mind about

the reliability of Coalition intelligence on the Iranians. He also said that the decision to release the Iranians had not been an easy one, but had been made within a larger political context in which the GOI had not wanted to face a crisis with respect to its relations with Iran. Nevertheless, he said that his discussions with the Iranian Ambassador about the incident had been frank, stressing that the GOI was not naive about Tehran's intentions and emphasizing the need for the Iranians to respect Iraq's sovereignty. He said that he told the Iranians that the MFA should be their primary point of contact within the GOI. Zebari said that in the aftermath of the incident, the MFA intended to update the diplomatic list and take steps to centralize how visas were issued. On this last point, PM Maliki said that Zebari should consider stripping the Iraqi Ambassador in Iran of his authority to issue visas. Zebari expressed concern that during the crisis the PM's Office and the Embassy had often interacted directly in a manner that sometimes resulted in delays or confusion because the MFA was not in the loop.

13. (S) Maliki said that it was unacceptable that a delegation from another government had come to Iraq to "help on security matters" in the way that the Iranians had, circumventing the MFA. He said that if the Iranians had been legitimate in their desire to help Iraq they would have coordinated their trip via the MFA per standard diplomatic protocol. He said that if a similar group is detained in the future, he would not release them.

14. (S) National Security Advisor Rubaie reinforced Zebari's point about the need to look closely at visas issued to Iranians and to have the MFA as the primary point of contact

BAGHDAD 00000075 002 OF 004

for Iranian government officials. He also said that a problem existed in that agencies from one government often talk to their counterpart in another government, but that Iraq had no counterpart to Iran's Quds Force. When Finance Minister Jabr joked that JAM was the Quds Force counterpart, he got a hearty laugh from the group. More seriously, Rubaie suggested that a high-level GOI delegation should travel to Tehran to tell them to stop their support for EFP and other attacks against the Coalition, adding that such attacks could easily escalate into a direct confrontation between Iran and the coalition on Iraqi soil -- a situation that would clearly be against Iraqi national interest. He asked that this comment be made a part of the permanent minutes of the meeting.

15. (S) Jabr revealed that he had been about to travel to Tehran on official business when the detentions happened. He said he had considered canceling, but Maliki had asked him to continue with his travel out of concerns that a cancellation might only further escalate the situation. Jabr said that he had taken a private message from the PM to the Iranians that he was working the issue, but would need time -- ten days -- for the Iranians to be released. Maliki interjected, pointing out that the ten days had been based on what General Casey had told him he thought he would need to carry out his investigations. Jabr said that the Iranians had asked him to participate in a joint press conference about the issue, but he had declined.

16. (S) When Chief of Staff of the Iraqi Armed Forces General Babbikir noted that the Iranians were still holding an Iraqi interpreter from an earlier incident along the Iranian border, several people said that they wished they had been made aware of this information in order to have tried to use the negotiations over the diplomats to obtain his release.

17. (S) General Casey emphasized that the Iranians were intelligence officers engaged in activities to attack the Coalition and destabilize Iraq. The Ambassador said that while it was natural that some Iraqi politicians had had contact with foreign intelligence agencies during their time

in exile, now that they were a part of a sovereign Iraqi government such contact should be done state-to-state. He said he thought it was inappropriate that the Quds Force was the primary Iranian organ for dealing with Iraq. He suggested that a set of guidelines be drawn up to govern how, by what means, and through what channels, Iraqi officials could have contact with Tehran.

#### Baghdad Security Plan Update

-----

¶18. (S) Minister of Defense Abdul Qadir Jasim updated MCNS members on revisions to the Baghdad Security Plan (BSP), stressing that it was almost ready for implementation. He said the most urgent issue to be resolved was who will be the commander of the Baghdad headquarters. General Casey agreed that the commander for Baghdad should be named quickly, adding that if it was not done within the next day or so a committee composed of the MOI and MOD should be convened to move certain issues forward.

¶19. (S) Maliki asked that an assessment be done of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) units to be involved in the BSP to verify that they were properly equipped and prepared for action. He said that after several years of fighting, Iraqi soldiers were tired and needed to be evaluated, physically and mentally.

¶10. (S) Emphasizing the importance of the BSP, Minister of State for National Security Waeli said that the security situation in the city was getting to the point where even the International Zone (IZ) was not secure. In support of this assertion, he pointed to a recent incident on Haifa Street in downtown Baghdad just "meters away" from the IZ. Maliki agreed, noting that major parts of the city -- such as Karkh -- were "out of control."

¶11. (S) Zebari said that there was a serious problem with people -- including parliamentarians -- talking in the media about a plan which was supposed to be secret. Maliki agreed, focusing particular anger at the indiscreet remarks by the MOD and MOI spokesmen. Maliki instructed Abdul Qadir to tell his spokesman he was not allowed on TV anymore. Abdul Qadir responded that he had already changed the job from "spokesman" to "media advisor."

BAGHDAD 00000075 003 OF 004

¶12. (S) Arguing that "the new plan is like the old plan," Deputy Prime Minister al-Zubai said that the latest revision of the BSP would not be useful. He said that MCNS members should admit that all that had been achieved in the past did not bring peace for the people of Baghdad. He said that a new strategy should be adopted "at the level of the American administration." He also said that the MCNS should be serious enough about the issue to agree to meet every day, adding that "otherwise the world won't respect us."

#### PIC Update

-----

¶13. (S) Rubaie said that the Joint Committee for the Transfer of Security Responsibility was on the verge of recommending Maysan be transferred to Provincial Iraqi Control, but that the existence of the Emergency Security Committee (ESC) in Al Amarah was a major stumbling block. Rubaie suggested to Maliki that the ESC be either ended or transformed into a political committee. Maliki said he was prepared to end the ESC. UK Ambassador Asquith said that he thought the ESC was weak and ineffective anyway.

¶14. (S) General Casey said that he was not ready to agree to transfer the committee, arguing that the militias in the province were stronger than the police. When Rubaie pointed out that the recommendation to transfer would be based on a joint assessment which was conducted with the British forces

in MND-SE, Casey said he did not necessarily agree with that assessment. He asked that decisions on this issue be delayed a week in order that he could review the situation more fully.

¶15. (S) Rubaie explained that transfer of the three Kurdish provinces were still being held up by Kurdish demands that transfer be linked to Peshmerga transformation. Maliki said that he would talk to KRG President Masoud Barzani about the issue.

#### Militia Committee and Disarmament

-----

¶16. (S) Maliki noted that a joint GOI-Coalition committee was being formed to examine the issue of disbanding militias. He said that when the committee had developed ideas on how to move forward, the MCNS could discuss them. When DPM Zubai said that people should be asked to turn in their weapons, Jabr said that citizens could not be asked to disarm when the government has proven itself unable to protect them. Abdul Qadir pointed out that people would be allowed to keep a personal weapon for self defense -- such as a pistol or rifle -- but not heavier weapons such as rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and mortars. Waeli agreed with this point, arguing that the government should not take on a "mission impossible."

#### MOI Update: FPS, POE, Train and Equip

-----

¶17. (S) Following up on the December 24, 2006, MCNS discussion of the transfer of the Facility Protection Service (FPS) into his ministry (reftel), Interior Minister Bolani said that he had conducted an initial review of the 153,000 FPS employees. The review had discovered 40,000 "ghost" employees who did not actually exist. Finance Minister Jabr said that he had taken steps to transfer the budget for the FPS to MOI.

¶18. (S) Bolani urged the PM to agree to merge Ports of Entry responsibility with the MOI's Border Security unit. He said that it was important there be a single, independent budget for the combined unit. He said he had already spoken to the Finance Ministry, which had agreed the merger made budgetary sense.

¶19. (S) Bolani said that efforts to train and equip the MOI, including the National Police, were moving forward. He said that the Finance Minister had helped provide necessary funding for certain life support issues. Maliki, however, expressed his frustration that "we hear a lot, but see nothing" -- particularly when it comes to the fulfillment of supply contracts. He said that the MOI never seems well-equipped, pointing out that the police lack cars.

#### Budgets and Contracts Cause More Consternation

-----

BAGHDAD 00000075 004.2 OF 004

¶20. (S) Jabr said that based on pressure from MNSTC-I he had hastily arranged for funds to be transferred to an account for MOD use, but that he had since learned no contracts were ready to be let. As a result, he said he did not see why the issue had been so urgent that he had had to rush through the funds. He also warned that if at least 75 percent of the funds were not spent within six months, the money would have to be sent back to the central treasury. Maliki stressed the need to equip the ISF, claiming that there was a desperate need for weapons and that soldiers do not have proper footwear. Abdul Qadir assured them that he was working to agree contracts as quickly as possible and that he expected to meet the 75 percent requirement. At the same time, he argued that it was important that the GOI take its time to outfit its security forces properly and in a cost-effective manner. He said the army had weapons, but they were old and inferior. He did not want to repeat this mistake. As an

example, he said that the MoD would conduct an assessment of the U.S.-produced M-16 and M-4 rifles and compare them to Soviet-style Kalishnikovs. He added that there was a significant price difference between these weapons and that that too would have to be taken into account before making any decisions. Abdul Qadir argued that the contracting committee and the public integrity committee were major stumbling blocks to his ability to conclude contracts in a timely fashion.

KHALILZAD